

HOW TO...

Make money from web ads

You don't have to own a big dot com company to make money from the internet. Even a small hobby site can be used to earn some hard cash, as Simon Edwards explains

Online advertising deals can be very complicated. If you prefer the simple life, try Google's AdSense service. After just a few clicks and a couple of days, your site could be generating an income that at least covers your web hosting costs, even if you can't afford that mansion. Adding a small amount of Google's HTML code will display subtle adverts on your site, and if lots of people view or click on them, your AdSense account is credited. You receive a cheque from Google whenever your balance exceeds \$100 (around £54).

1 Sign up for an account by visiting www.google.com/adsense and click the Click Here to Apply button. You need to enter your email address and choose a password. Choose a strong password as this account will be worth some money to you later on.

2 Choose the type of account that you want. You can have an Individual Account, which is primarily for individuals and sole traders, or an Established Business account, which will send a cheque made payable to a business name. We're going for an individual account, as our personal hobby site doesn't belong to a business.

You also need to enter some personal details so that Google can pay you. These include your name and address, the URL of your website and the language the website uses (English, not HTML). There are also options to subscribe to the newsletter. Make sure you tick the Select AdSense for content box, which enables the advertising

feature we'll be using. The AdSense for search option isn't necessary unless you also want to add Google's search features to your site. Once you've done all this, Google will send you an email with a URL in it. Click on this and wait a couple of days for Google to check your application.

3 If Google accepts your application, you'll receive an email asking you to log in and copy the code you need to add to your site. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and select the code in the Your AdSense code box. Copy it to the clipboard using Ctrl-C, open your web page using your favourite editor and paste the code into your page where you want the adverts to appear.

EXPERT TIP
To stop adverts for your competitors appearing on your site, AdSense has a Competitive Ad Filter, which creates a list of sites whose ads should never appear.

4 Open the page using a web browser. Don't upload the page to your web space yet if you want to experiment with different designs. You might find the advert isn't the right shape, for instance, and this can be changed.

Go back to the Google AdSense page used in Step 3 and click the drop-down list containing the various advert layouts. To see all the different types of adverts that Google provides, click on the View examples link. We're going to pick the entry called 250x250 Square. This changes the code at the bottom of the page. Scroll down and select this code, as you did in Step 3. Copy it to the clipboard and paste it into your site.

5 When you open your page, you should see the Google advert appear where you pasted the code. In this example, the page has been loaded into the web browser from our hard disk, so although the advert is the correct size its content is not related to the site. When we upload this page to the web, the advert will change and the services or products listed will have more in common with the subject of our site. This is great, as visitors to your site are more likely to be interested in the adverts if they aren't about completely random subjects. For example, a sports website will attract sports fans. The adverts will be sports related, so you can be fairly sure at least some of your visitors will click on the adverts, earning you cash.

6 The adverts that show up on your site use Google's default colours, a mix of white and blue. This will work well with a lot of sites that have white backgrounds, but may clash with other designs. Luckily, you can choose your own colour scheme. Click the Ad colours button on AdSense's toolbar and pick the colours you think will suit your site's design. Choose different colours for the various elements of the text advert. Your choice will be reflected in the example ad on the left. Once you've picked a winning combination, click in the Palette name box and type a word to describe your colour scheme. Click the Save and get code button and repeat Step 3, pasting the new code into your page.

